

SITE VISIT - WALDO WILCOX RANCH
WEDNESDAY, MAY 19, 2004

Price, Utah
7:00 a.m.

PRESENT

ASHBY, Ken	Farmer
BARBER, Brad	Planning Consultant
BENNETT, John	GOPB Staff
CARVER, Brian	GOPB Staff
HUTCHINGS, Brent	Division of Wildlife Resources
JONES, Derris	Division of Wildlife Resources
JONES, Kevin	State Architect
MANN, Dave	Division of Wildlife Resources
METCALF, Duncan	Professor of Anthropology
MORGAN, Bob	Executive Director, Dept .of Natural Resources
NEILSON, Nancy	GOPB Staff
PAGE, Carol	Davis County Commissioner
PETERSON, Carrie	DWS Directors Office
PRICE, Ann	Division of Forestry, Fire & State Lands
SCHEN, Dave	Ecosystem Management Coord.
STEIN, Reece	Channel 2
WILCOX, Waldo	Previous owner of the Site

SITE VISIT MEETING PLACE – Greenwell Inn, 655 East Main

Car pools were set up at the meeting place. A cold lunch was prepared because the site is in a remote location.

TRAVELING TO THE SITE

First we passed the old and deserted Horse Canyon Coal Mine. This booming mine died out sometime in the 60's. "If hills could talk," someone said, "just think of the stories we would have about those days. It would be nice to have a debriefing of places like this before they die out." A new mine will be built in Lila Canyon which will look up to steep cliffs and mountain roads.

There are three ways to get to this remote area believe it or not. One way is almost impossible. The canyons you travel through include Big Horse, Little Horse, Range Creek and Sheep Canyon. Right now the site area is open for administrative access only so there are locked gates close to the private property areas.

Next we passed a tree which had an old trappers name carved on it, Sam Gilson they said it was. Imagine this place back then with all of the wildlife. We only saw two mule deer, no bears (thank goodness) and a chicken partridge known also as the gray ghost. They

are known as gray ghosts because they are so hard to hunt. There was a time when the former owner of the Waldo Wilcox Ranch saw as many as five bear grazing on alfalfa on his property. It was quite common to see bears grazing.

One can only imagine the lush forest vegetation back then. The Pinion pines were plentiful on our visit. There were also Junipers, Douglas Fir pines, Quaking Aspens and Conifers to name a few. Willow Cottonwood trees are native to the area and have long narrow leaves. "Box Elder trees have sap that when frozen into icicles are sweet and good enough to eat," one of our group recalled. It's always uplifting to be in a forest. Nature is unorganized when it plants vegetation but the resulting beauty is always stunning and inspiring. It's like one of our group said, "Nature can become a passion. It's not like having a job, you gain a mistress."

Larkspur, Primrose, Indian Paint Brush and the ancient Globe Mallow (tiny orange tulip like flowers) are some of the flora that grace the area. There was a field of Globe Mallow if you can imagine. It was like stepping back into dinosaur days when these flowers flourished. You can also enjoy the pretty purple Loco weed, Seagull Lilies and miniature looking daisies! And at the higher elevations Barrel Cactus don't produce pink and yellow flowers only a gorgeous red one. Lower elevations however, produce the bright pink, yellow and red blossoms.

Waldo Wilcox, former owner of the property, was a pleasure to have with us on this site visit. He expressed his appreciation to the State of Utah for their careful care of his beloved property and especially to Derris Jones of the Division of Wildlife Resources.

Waldo pointed out his favorite spot. It was in a small meadow where we could view a rock formation at the top of a mountain, "shaped just like an old fashioned locomotive" as Waldo put it. Some like to call it Waldo's Train but it is also known as 'Locomotive Rock' or 'Balanced Rock.' The old train in any case is a very clear image of days gone by.

There are many stories about this area that Waldo says will go with him to the grave. However, the evidence of his caretaking of this special area is prevalent. For one thing, he managed to single handedly raise the water table in the area. How so? He used old mining cars to channel the river in strategic spots. This afforded the ranch to be irrigated, the river enjoyed by family and a well to be built. These river diversions were nothing short of genius.

"The Walking X" brand of the Wilcox Ranch is neatly displayed on Waldo's truck. This is an emblem of a treasured piece of land that was inhabited by the Wilcox family for sixty years. Meticulous and attentive care of this land by this family affords a deep-felt respect. Not to mention the pictures painted in our minds by Waldo of his grazing cattle in this area of clean air and summer sunshine. He said the grazing cattle keep the grass off which helps to prevent fires from spreading. Speaking of fires, there had been one in the area recently that was started by lightning but the rain had put it out at the edge of Waldo's property.

Seeing steep grassy slopes in Big Horse Canyon and breathing clean mountain air made the trip worth it but there was more. Because Freemont Indians had lived here we were able to see some of their artifacts. Seeing ancient arrowheads, pottery chips and witnessing their colored rock art left you at a loss for words. We should always reverence and respect these relics of our planets history. There was evidence of an ancient city here.

Because these people were nomadic and had to go where the food was their homes were built high for lookouts and protection. On one high peak there was evidence of an ancient tower. It's hard for an enemy to battle uphill and mountains gave them protection.

Rocks like chocolate chert were used for trading to make arrowheads and other weapons. We saw some of these arrowheads but we left them there! It is good that these treasures are protected by laws so that their legacy can live on for future generations.

One of our group said they had seen Quaking Aspens that were 150' tall and 3' wide in the LaSalle Forest. But they were cut down because of development. Maybe that's why there is such a feeling of urgency to save our Open Spaces and Natural Resources. We are beginning to realize the losses we have incurred. The site visits will go on. And hopefully there will be successful occasions to preserve treasured lands like the Waldo Wilcox Ranch.